

#### 4VAC15-240-40

#### Game: Turkey: Open Season; spring season for bearded turkeys

##### Summary:

The proposal is to allow hunting from ½ before sunrise to sunset throughout the entire spring turkey season.

##### Proposed language of amendment:

#### **4VAC15-240-40. Open Season; spring season for bearded turkeys.**

A. Except as otherwise provided in this section, it shall be lawful to hunt bearded turkeys from the second Saturday in April and for 35 days following, both dates inclusive, from 1/2 hour before sunrise to ~~12:00 noon prevailing time during the first 23 days and from 1/2 hour before sunrise to sunset during the last 13 days of the spring season~~ sunset.

B. Turkey hunters 15 years of age and younger and holders of an apprentice hunting license may hunt on the first Saturday in April and the following calendar day from 1/2 hour before sunrise to sunset, when in compliance with applicable license requirements and when accompanied and directly supervised by an adult who has a valid Virginia hunting license on his person or an adult who is exempt from purchasing a hunting license. Adult hunters accompanying youth hunters or apprentice license holders on these days may assist with calling but they shall not carry or discharge weapons. Youth and apprentice turkey hunters are limited on this weekend to one turkey per hunter.

C. Upon receipt of an application from an officer or other designated official representative of any nonprofit organization that has support for sportsmen with impaired mobility as one of its mission statements, the director may issue a permit to an officer or representative of the organization that allows sportsmen with impaired mobility to hunt bearded wild turkeys from 1/2 hour before sunrise to sunset from the 10th through 16th days of the spring season. Such authorization shall be valid only when hunting during an authorized event. All participants shall be in compliance with all requirements of law and regulation that apply during the spring season, and bearded turkeys killed during these events shall count toward daily and annual bag limits.

D. Bearded turkeys may be hunted by calling.

E. It shall be unlawful to use dogs or organized drives for the purpose of hunting.

F. It shall be unlawful to use or have in possession any shot larger than number 2 fine shot when hunting turkeys with a shotgun.

##### Rationale:

The Department routinely receives public input seeking additional spring turkey hunting recreation opportunity by providing all day hunting throughout the entire spring turkey season. This feedback routinely references potential impacts of inclement weather on hunting opportunities and the current ½-hour before sunrise to noon time restriction limiting hunting opportunities due to work-related responsibilities. Frequently referenced are the particular challenges in offering youth spring turkey hunting opportunities due to school responsibilities and the abundance of extracurricular activities for youth during this time of year. Providing additional hunting opportunities during the spring season could have potential population-level impacts, especially as it relates to the unintentional or illegal take of adult

hens during the breeding season. During the early portion of Virginia's spring turkey season, adult hens are still actively breeding and may be more vulnerable to unintentional or illegal harvest. This vulnerability decreases as the breeding season progresses and adult hens begin to lay eggs and incubate nests. If mortality of adult hens increases, potential population impacts could arise through decreased productivity within the turkey population. At the same time, spring harvest data suggest that turkey populations are generally stable at an all-time high level across most areas of Virginia. Recognizing the potential for biological impacts, this proposal is made to address demands for additional recreational opportunities and to aide in hunter recruitment.